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WBFO News

Redistricting could be headed to court

Joyce Kryszak (2011-06-29)

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BUFFALO, NY (WBFO) - 11 new legislative district lines are not yet drawn for Erie County. But county leaders are busy drawing battle lines. If the matter ends up in court, some say the legislative process could end up a mess.

Erie County Executive Chris Collins Tuesday sent his veto letter to the legislature. He roundly denounced the plan for re-drawing legislative districts that narrowly passed by a majority of Democrats.

Collins said the plan was obvious political gerrymandering that would dilute minority representation. One proposed district would cover nearly half the county's land mass. Collins said there's still time for lawmakers to send him a better plan.

"The clock is ticking. It's disappointing we are under the deadline we are today," said Collins. "And, yes, there is time, but time is running quite short."

But political maneuvering by lawmakers who are trying to carve out beneficial districts makes an acceptable alternative unlikely by Thursday. And republican lawmakers said they will block a veto-override.

Erie County Comptroller Mark Poloncarz criticized Collins for his veto. He said the result will most likely be costly, protracted lawsuits.

He said a judge would probably order the 15 current districts remain for another year and order weighted voting. Poloncarz said that could throw the entire legislative process in chaos.

"The last time they did the redistricting when they went to weighted voting, literally every vote had to be calculated to the percentage, and there were times in which we were going down to hundredths of a percentage of a vote to determine if a specific measure was passed or rejected," said Poloncarz.

He added, "And it also created a much more political environment because individuals would hold back their votes under the anticipation that their percentage could have a huge impact on whether something would pass or not."

Under such a scenario, special elections would need to be held the following year when, theoretically, new districts would be drawn. © Copyright 2011, [WBFO](#)

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Erie County Legislative Districts photo courtesy Erie County Board of Elections